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UNCLAS HALIFAX 000172

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MAJOR DRUG SEIZURE IN ATLANTIC CANADA

1. This past weekend, at Whitney Pier, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada, during a routine search of the Canadian Steamship Lines vessel the "Shelia Ann", Canadian Border Services Agency officials and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police seized 83 kilos of cocaine. The drugs were hidden in two duffle bags and are said to be worth C\$10 million. The ship was reported as coming to Canada from Maracaibo, Venezuela, with a load of coal for a Nova Scotia power plant. The drugs were reportedly hidden in an underwater grate at the bottom of the ship in Venezuela. Police believe divers were used to put the cocaine in the grate.

2. After a thorough investigation of the ship and interviews with the captain and crew, the "Sheila Ann" was released on July 2, 2004 for it's onward destination in Florida. Consulate staff observed it leaving Halifax harbor the same day.

3. This seizure has gained national interest as the ship belongs to a Montreal-based company, CSL, formerly owned by Prime Minister Paul Martin and his wife Sheila and since August 2003 controlled by their three sons.

HILL